



“Modern and Contemporary Art History” - Spring Semester 2018

Wednesdays – Thursdays, 12-13,30, Room G6

Prof. Sergio Cortesini (sergio.cortesini@unipi.it)

Syllabus

Main Goals:

The course aims to provide students with a basic knowledge of the history of Western art from Impressionism to the late 1960s, with some stronger emphasis on a few key exponents of Italian art. Rather than an exhaustive survey of movements and artists—which would have been an exorbitant task anyway—the selection of the arguments of this course was made with the intent of introducing students coming from diverse cultural backgrounds to some critical tools necessary to comprehend the challenges to common taste brought forth by many modern or contemporary artworks. In fact, with the unfolding of modernist ideologies and aesthetics, artists have progressively subverted the traditional assumptions about the representational nature of pictures and statues, and the delighting, moral, or educational functions of their fruition. Therefore, modernistic artworks shall be considered not only for their formal-stylistic features, but also in their historical, political, intellectual contexts.

Please, note that active participation in discussion is strongly encouraged. Students are therefore asked to read all the assigned readings before each lesson, in order to attend the classes already with a basic knowledge and engage in a more profitable dialogue with the teacher about any doubts or topics that may require explanations and further elaboration.

Readings:

- Arnason: H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art*, New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1970.
- Rubin: James H. Rubin, *Impressionism*, London, Phaidon, 1999.
- Foster et alii: Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin Buchloh, David Joselit, *Art since 1900. Modernism Antimodernism Postmodernism*, New York, Thames and Hudson, 2011.
- Humphreys: Richard Humphreys, *Futurism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Harrison-Wood: Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (editors), *Art in Theory 1900-1990. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford-Cambridge, Blackwell, 1992.
- Harrison-Wood-Gaiger: Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger (editors), *Art in Theory 1815-1900. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998.
- Phillips: Lisa: Phillips, *The American Century. Art and Culture 1950-2000*, New York, Whitney Museum/W. W. Norton, 1999.
- Collins: Bradford R. Collins, *Pop Art*, London, Phaidon, 2012.



- Vetrocq: Marcia E. Vetrocq, *Painting and Beyond: Recovery and Regeneration, 1943-1952*, in Germano Celant (editor), *The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943-1968*, New York, Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1994, pp. 20-31.
- Briganti: Giuliano Briganti, *Cultural Provocation: Italian Art in the Early Sixties*, in *Italian Art in the 20th Century: Painting and Sculpture, 1900-1988*, London, Royal Academy of Art, 1988, pp. 301-307.
- Potts: Alex Potts, *Disencumbered Objects*, in "October", vol. 124, Spring 2008, pp. 169-189.
- Silk: Gerard Silk, *Myths and Meanings in Manzoni's Merda d'artista*, in "Art Journal", Vol. 52, No. 3, Autumn, 1993, pp. 65-75.

1. A brief introduction to painting in the Nineteenth Century; Manet

Arnason, pp. 13-22; Rubin, pp. 9-48.

Suggested: Harrison-Wood-Gaiger, pp. 493-506 (Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*).

2. Monet, Renoir, Degas, Seurat, Gauguin

Arnason, pp. 22-27 (*Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas*) and pp. 37-40 (*Paul Cézanne*); Rubin, pp. 308-320.

3. Van Gogh, Cézanne, Redon

Arnason: pp. 40-46 (*Vincent van Gogh; Paul Cézanne*); pp. 70-72 (*Odilon Redon*); Rubin, pp. 373-387; Harrison-Wood-Gaiger, pp. 896-898 (*Vincent van Gogh, Letters to his brother Theo [only 30 April 1885]*); Harrison-Wood, pp. 37-40 (*Paul Cézanne, Letters to Emile Bernard*).

Suggested: Harrison-Wood-Gaiger, pp. 945-948 (*Vincent van Gogh, Letters to his brother Theo and his sister Wilhelmina, [8 September 1888; 5 June 1890]*); pp. 1064-1966 (*Odilon Redon, Suggestive Art*).

4. Fauves and Cubists

Arnason, pp. 100-103 (*Henri Matisse and Fauvism to 1912*); pp. 117-122 (*Picasso before cubism*); Foster et alii, pp. 70-84 (*1906-1907*); pp. 100-105 (*1910*); Harrison-Wood, pp. 72-78 (*Henri Matisse, Notes of a Painter*).

5. Cubism and the beginning of Abstraction

Foster et alii, pp. 106-124 (*1911; 1912; 1913*); Harrison-Wood, pp. 152-154 (*Robert Delaunay, On the Construction of Reality...*).

6. Italian Futurism



Humphreys, pp. 12-48; Foster et alii, pp. 90-96 (1909: exclude *Fascism and Futurism*); Harrison-Wood, pp. 145-152 (Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, *The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism*; Umberto Boccioni, *Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto*).

7. German Expressionism

Arnason, p. 163 (introduction only); pp. 164-168 (*Emil Nolde; Die Brücke; Ernst Kirchner*), pp. 172-174 (*Der Blaue Reiter. Vasily Kandinsky to 1914*); Foster et alii, pp. 85-88 (1908: exclude sub-chapter *Dehumanization as diagnostic*); Harrison-Wood, pp. 67-68 (Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Programme of the Brücke*); pp. 101-102 (Emil Nolde, *On Primitive Art*); pp. 86-91 (Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*).

8. Abstract art

Foster et alii, pp. 130-134 (1915); pp. 148-153 (1917a); Arnason, pp. 219-221 (*Kasimir Malevich*); Harrison-Wood, pp. 282-287 (Piet Mondrian, *Dialogue on the New Plastic*); pp. 290-292 (Kasimir Malevich, *Non-Objective Art and Suprematism*).

9. Dada

Foster et alii, pp. 135-138 (1916a: exclude sub-chapter *A miniature sublime*); pp. 174-179 (1920); pp. 186-190 (1922); Harrison-Wood, pp. 248-255 (Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto 1918*; Richard Huelsenbeck, *First Dada Manifesto*).

10. Duchamp and de Chirico

Foster et alii, pp. 96-97 (1909 – *Fascism and Futurism* only); pp. 125-129 (1914); pp. 160-165 (1918); Arnason, pp. 284-289 (*Giorgio de Chirico*); Harrison-Wood, pp. 60-61 (de Chirico, *Mystery and Creation*); p. 248 (Marcel Duchamp, *The Richard Mutt Case*).

11. Surrealism; “Degenerate art” and *Guernica*

Foster et alii, pp. 190-195 (1924); pp. 250-254 (1931); pp. 281-285 (1937a);

Suggested: Harrison-Wood, pp. 440-446 (André Breton, *Surrealism and Painting*).

12. Abstract expressionism and *Informel*

Phillips, pp. 12-27 (*The Postwar American Art Community*; and *Abstract Expressionism: The New York Vanguard* [exclude sub-chapter *Sculpture of the New York School*]); Foster et alii, pp. 369-374 (1946); pp. 380-391 (1947b; 1949a); Harrison-Wood, pp. 593-595 (Jean Dubuffet, *Crude Art Preferred to Cultural Art*);

Suggested: Harrison-Wood, pp. 590-593 (*Notes for the Well-Lettered*); and pp. 619-620 (Michel Tapié, *An Other Art*).

13. Italian art 1943-1953

Vetrocq, pp. 20-31.



14. New-Dada/Nouveau Réalisme and Pop art

Phillips, pp. 83-94. Collins, pp. 301-315; Harrison-Wood, pp. 711-712 (Pierre Restany, *The New Realists*).

15. Pop art/Italian art to 1968

Phillips, pp. 109-11; 114-145; Briganti.

16. Italian art to 1968

Briganti; Potts; Silk.

17. Italian art to 1968

Potts; Silk

18. Field trip

Final exam

The final exam will consist in a written quiz and a paper about some of the topics address during the classes.